

Alnwick Urban District.

Annual Report

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health.

1913.

Alnwick Urban District Council.

Medical Officer's Annual Report, 1913.

GENTLEMEN,—

THE subjoined table gives in concise form the causes of death as set forth in Table III. of the Local Government Board requirements.

Phthisis	...	...	13	Appendicitis	...	...	1
Other Tuberculous Diseases	...	...	7	Cirrhosis of Liver	...	...	3
Cancer	...	...	9	Alcoholism	...	...	2
Heart Disease	...	...	11	Nephritis	...	...	6
Bronchitis	...	...	4	Congenital Debility, etc.	...	...	3
Pneumonia	...	...	5	Violent Deaths	...	...	2
Other Respiratory Diseases	...	...	1	Suicide	...	...	2
Diarrhœa	...	...	2	Other Defined Diseases	...	...	38
			Ill Defined Diseases	...	...	5	

The birth rate (20.6) is the lowest since 1907: births 174 (77 males and 67 females). Although our death rate (16.3 per 1,000) is somewhat higher than for the last few years, the town generally has been healthy, and I may say that Alnwick has experienced rather less than the normal share of minor ailments.

The deaths for the year were 114 (57 males and 57 females). October gave the largest total, viz. 19 i.e. .33 per 1000, a rate practically four times that of March which was 8.36.

There were 17 deaths of children under one year, which gives .103 per 1000 births registered.

The mortality from phthisis was 13 which represents 1.8. This is again high, and yet a fair proportion of those who succumbed to the disease were residents in better class districts who were able to obtain fresh air and suitable treatment.

Six notifications of phthisis have been received during the twelve months.

As regards other tuberculous diseases, we have had 7 deaths.

I have had 4 notifications of tuberculous disease other than pulmonary, and I can quite understand and sympathise with the attitude of the general practitioner in these cases. I, as an ordinary medical man, would, in the treatment of my patients, resent the interference of another doctor who happened to be the Medical Officer of Health, to say nothing of the feelings of the patients themselves or their relatives.

Although it has not been found practicable to give the sanatorium benefits for phthisis, there are patients in our district who are in receipt of domiciliary treatment. Should the idea of the sanatorium treatment ever be realised, I hope it will be on different lines from that which I believe prevails at present.

If phthisis is communicable, surely those who are far advanced in the disease are more in need of isolation than those in the earlier stages. Yet we hear of hopeless cases returning home—the wish to die at home is perfectly natural—only to disseminate the bacillus of tubercule to their friends and surroundings.

Half the number of deaths attributable to bronchitis, pneumonia and other diseases of the respiratory organs occurred at the age of 65 or over. The total number was 10 and the rate 1.42.

The two fatal cases of zymotic disease were of infants under two years, and are returned as diarrhoea and enteritis respectively. This goes to prove that, during 1913 at any rate, we have had that immunity from summer diarrhoea which we have been fortunate enough to experience during the last two or three years. At the risk of being accused of harping on the same old string, I attribute this to the comparative scarcity of house flies, and, strange to say, a cool dry summer without much dust. The zymotic death rate is .28 per 1000.

It is worthy of note that up till September 15th no case of infectious disease was notified. From that date until the end of the year there have been 11, 5 of diphtheria and 6 of scarlet fever. In addition to these, one case which had already been reported to the Rural Authority came into the town.

Fortunately a swab from the patient's throat was pronounced free, otherwise I would have been compelled to ask the Council to prosecute the person in question for exposing himself in a public place while suffering from an infectious disease.

With one exception, the cases of scarlet fever were notified in December, and, at one time, as I pointed out in my monthly report, I was in fear of an epidemic. The last serious outbreak was in 1899. Since then a new generation has arisen liable to contract this fever. Thus, if the disease establishes itself, we might expect serious consequences.

In looking over my register, I find that for the last six or seven years the notifications of diphtheria have been increasing, while, in proportion, those of scarlet fever have been diminishing.

To my mind, this may be accounted for in one of two ways—either (a) the virus of Scarlet Fever is taking on the nature of Diphtheria, or (b) as a result of modern research, a swab of the patient's throat is more often taken, and so mild cases of diphtheria, which would previously have passed unrecognised, are now identified.

On the 1st of April another disease will become notifiable viz. Ophthalmia Neonatorum. I consider this regulation as among the most important that have recently been issued.

Inflammation in the eyes in the newly born—to give the disease a simple name—is a common cause of blindness in children, although, fortunately, we here do not come across many cases. How often is the doctor told that the baby has got cold in its eyes! Nine times out of ten this is a mild case of Ophthalmia, and, with proper treatment at birth, can be prevented. If, on the other hand, the case is neglected, the trouble may develop and even lead to permanent blindness.

During the spring months we had an outbreak of mumps, such as usually follows measles. It, however, died down without leaving any serious effects, if we except the low school attendance, which, after all, is a secondary consideration in the eyes of the Medical Officer of Health.

With regard to the forms for Notification of Infectious Diseases, I would suggest that those issued by the various Councils be standardised as to shape and size. At present they are all different, and this is both confusing and inconvenient.

The weather throughout the year has been colder than usual, but inclined to be dry.

We had $26\frac{1}{2}$ inches of rain for the 12 months, a decrease of 10 inches on the rainfall for 1912, and about $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches below the average for the district.

With the exception of September, the last six months of the year were very dry, though an absence of sunshine was recorded.

Of the minor ailments we met with, the most common were indigestion, and, especially among the younger women, anæmia. Both are due to carious teeth; in fact, I make bold to say it is difficult to come across a girl with a really sound set of teeth. I am convinced that this anæmia is brought about by what I might term the self poisoning of the system, due to septic conditions of the mouth. If a person cannot properly chew his food, the natural result is indigestion.

As to the cause of bad teeth, we can but conjecture. I have heard the hardness of the water blamed for making the teeth brittle, but I am myself inclined to the theory that the alteration in the methods of preparing food (the frying pan versus the gridiron, close ranges and gas stoves versus the open fire), and the foods themselves (various proprietary articles as against the oatmeal of our forefathers), are responsible.

To put it plainly, we haven't to use our teeth to chew our food in the same way as folk used to have to do. Here is a case where want of use begets decay.

SLAUGHTER HOUSES.

These are all under the control of the Urban Council, and have been well managed during the year. I have received no complaints, and on my visits I have generally found them well conducted and as clean as one can reasonably expect.

LODGING HOUSES.

The two Lodging Houses, one in Hotspur Street and the other in Pottergate, have undergone change of management during the year, and I am glad to report a general improvement in the superintendence.

DAIRIES AND COWSHEDS.

The Council has had under consideration the new Model Bye-Laws and have adopted them. It is a matter for regret that the Local Government Board could not see its way to modify the minimum of 800 cubic feet of air space per cow, where the cattle are not turned out for some portion of the day. I anticipate, as a result of the regulations, a welcome change in the condition of many of the sheds.

I would like to point out that the new rules give ample time for the owners and occupiers to put their premises in a sound sanitary condition.

The milk supply of the town has this year been better than in the past, and it is possible to obtain milk at any hour without, as formerly, being dependent on the morning and evening delivery.

The number of cowkeepers in the Urban Area is 33 and the number of cows kept by them is 150. There are 4 milk shops in the town, largely supplied from outside.

PUBLIC MORTUARY.

This has been completed, and, I am sorry to say, has already proved its usefulness.

PUBLIC CONVENIENCES.

A suitable site has been obtained in the Market Place. Plans are in course of preparation, and I understand the work will be begun as soon as these are ready.

SEWERAGE AND DRAINAGE.

I have before pointed out that many old-fashioned drains still exist in the town. They are all on private property, but, as opportunity presents itself, they are being reconstructed on up-to-date lines.

The Canongate Pumping Station has worked efficiently during the year.

At the main sewage works the enlargement of the sludge bed has greatly facilitated the work of the caretaker, as the sludge dries much more quickly and is more easily removed. I think it would be advisable to have an analysis of the effluent to prove the efficiency (or otherwise) of the present beds.

On several occasions I have visited the works, and am quite satisfied with the manner in which the premises are looked after.

AREA NUMBER 2.

The Council have lately had the advantage of an informal conference on this subject with Mr. Leonard, one of the Local Government Board Inspectors.

It is found to be necessary to erect at least six houses on a different site for the accommodation of six of the families displaced, and a suitable one has been obtained opposite the Gas Works.

As soon as the houses are built, we will be in a position to commence the demolition of this area, and to re-build on the cleared space.

HOUSING AND TOWN PLANNING.

Little has been done during 1913, as, owing to the illness of the Surveyor, the Inspector of Nuisances has been engaged on other business. Now that an assistant has been appointed, we hope to get to work without delay.

Another reason, which I have mentioned in previous reports, is the lack of housing accommodation for the working class, and it is obviously impossible to close houses unfit for habitation without providing for those living in the condemned area. There are many houses in Alnwick which fail to comply with modern requirements; many are back to back, require through ventilation, have no damp course, are too dark and have too small an air space. Of course, some of them have only one of the above drawbacks, and it is when you have a combination of defects that you are justified in condemning the property as unfit.

WATER SUPPLY.

Again we had recourse to pumping at Rugley Culvert springs. In 121 days about $4\frac{1}{2}$ million gallons were added to our supply. It is remarkable that part of this pumping had to be done between December 12th and January 2nd. I was in hopes that, by the time this report reached you, I would be able to congratulate the Council on the completion of the new scheme. However, certain defects in the rising main and in the Intake reservoir having shown themselves, **this is not yet possible.**

GENERAL IMPROVEMENTS.

These have been few in number. Several footpaths on the outskirts of the town have been tar paved, and two new houses have been erected and occupied. Several better class houses are unoccupied, but the demand for moderate priced workmen's dwellings is as great as ever.

The building byelaws have been revised and brought into line with the latest L.G.B. model.

I have again to thank the members of the Council for their courtesy and kindness, and the officials for their ready help whenever it has been needed.

R. B. ROBSON, M.B., M.R.C.S.



Council Offices,
Green Bat,
Alnwick.

March 16th, 1914

TO THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

Dear Sir,

I beg to submit to you a summary of work done as Inspector of Nuisances during last year, as taken from my "Journal."

The number of inspections made have been 723, which include inspections made of Common Lodging Houses, Slaughter Houses, and Cow-sheds.

Following on these inspections I find that 271 defects of various kinds were found, which at the end of the year were all remedied, with one or two exceptions, as were also 115 other nuisances not included in the above.

During the year, 210 informal notices were served, and it has not been necessary to serve any Statutory Notice in respect of any Sanitary defect. Among the items of improvement carried out, are improvements to 32 drainage systems which were found defective by test or otherwise. 51 obstructed drains have been cleared, 22 W.C.'s have been repaired, 21 pedestal basins have been fixed to replace insanitary hopper basins, 15 improved cisterns have taken the place of others which were defective, 3 additional closets have been provided on premises where there was a deficiency.

In connection with the inspection of Common Lodging Houses, on 9 occasions I had to call the attention of keeper of house to matters not in accordance with byelaws under which such premises are governed, the defects found at Cow-sheds numbered 13 and had reference to lack of limewashing or cleansing. At the Slaughter Houses defects due to improper disposal of offal by assistants or inattention by them to other cleansing matters were the only items found to complain of.

Disinfection of premises has been carried out after cases of Phthisis, Diphtheria, Scarlet Fever, and Mumps.

Yours respectfully,

JOSEPH MILBURN,

Inspector of Nuisances.

ALRESFORD RURAL DISTRICT.

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health

FOR THE YEAR 1913.

THE ANNUAL REPORT
ON THE
ALRESFORD RURAL DISTRICT,
FOR THE YEAR 1913,
BY
THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

GENTLEMEN,

I have arranged my Annual Report, as usual, under the several headings suggested by the County Medical Officer of Health.

(1) **Death Rate during the Year.**—During 1913 the deaths registered in the District were 71, to which number must be added eight deaths of residents dying out of the District, making a total of 79, and a death rate equal to 10.2 per 1000 of the inhabitants, which is the lowest death rate for several years. This satisfactory record is chiefly due to the diminished death rate of infants under one year of age, the number being at the rate of 30.3 per 1000 nett births compared with an average of 87.72 for the preceding five years. There were no deaths from infantile diarrhoea during the year owing to the autumn not being excessively hot, and therefore one great cause of infant mortality was absent. Eighteen deaths due to notifiable infectious diseases were registered in 1913, two being due to whooping cough and the remaining sixteen to tubercular disease, chiefly of the lungs.

(2) **The Birth Rate.**—The births numbered 132, equal to a birth rate of 17.52 per 1000 of the inhabitants, which is 2.1 per 1000 less than last year. This decrease is to be accounted for by the exodus of young married couples from agricultural districts and by the new-comers being generally past middle life. Fortunately, the low birth rate this year has been somewhat counter-balanced by the low infantile mortality.

(3) **The Physical Features of the District.**—The sub-soil of the greater part of the District is chalk overlaid by gravelly loam. In many of the villages there are some thick deposits of gavel, and on some of the higher ground there is a top sub-soil of clayey loam.

(4) **Occupation of the Inhabitants.**—The population is practically all rural and agricultural, there being no factories in the District.

(5) **House Accommodation.**—The District contains a large number of very old cottages, which are often, by reason of their construction, damp, ill-ventilated, and deficient in sunlight. The want of a bedroom with a good fireplace in case of illness and a proper pantry for the storage of food is very real in many cottages. In most of the villages there are sufficient cottages for the hands actually engaged on the farms, provided there are a fair proportion of single men, but if more and better cottages existed there is, I think, no doubt but that some of the young couples would remain in the villages, and not migrate to neighbouring towns, and we should not have to deplore, in every annual report, the decreasing birth rate of the countryside. There is a distinct want of a better class of cottage for married male servants, such as butlers, chauffeurs, and coachmen, employed at the large country houses, for whom, in some cases, no sufficient cottage accommodation has been provided to meet the requirements of this luxurious age.

(6) **Water Supply.**—The water supply has been sufficient and of good quality, and no deaths or illness have been attributed to its deficiency or impurity. A very important step was taken during the year to prevent our local water supply being at any future time depleted for the use of outside districts, the Board of Trade deciding that the Alresford Water Company should not draw more than 150,000 gallons per diem. Besides the above mentioned water supply, there are private deep wells sunk in the chalk, rain-water tanks, and tube wells.

(7) **Milk Supply.**—The fresh milk supply in some villages has to be supplemented by condensed, owing to the former being on most farms sent away to fulfil wholesale contracts. The infants brought up on condensed milk do fairly satisfactorily, provided it is not made from skimmed milk and too much sugar is not put in as a preservative.

The approaches to the cowsheds in several instances have been improved during the year, greatly benefiting the cleanliness of the cows. There is still great improvement required in the methods of milking and in the ventilation, lighting, and cleanliness of the cows and cowsheds.

Owing to the mildness of the winters of late, the cows have, in many cases, been kept out of doors all night, only coming in doors to be milked; this has tended to a cleaner milk and healthier cows.

I have not heard of any cows being condemned under the Tuberculosis Order in this district, or even of the Order being in force, and perhaps it is just as well, for some authorities on tuberculosis are now bringing forward the proposition that the inoculation of children with tuberculosis by drinking milk containing the bovine tubercle bacillus acts as a safeguard against their being infected through the lungs by the more malignant tubercle bacillus of the human form.

(8) **Food Inspection.**—No food was condemned during the year as being unfit for human consumption.

(9) **Bake-houses and Slaughter-houses.**—These houses have been inspected during the year, and the latter have been found in good sanitary condition. Ten defects found in the Bake-houses were remedied on receiving notice from the Inspector of Nuisances.

(10) **Drainage, Sewage, and Sewage Disposal.**—The whole district being rural in character, there is no sewage scheme in any part. Most of the houses have w.c.'s draining into dead wells, which are cleaned out, at the expense of the occupiers, by a firm which has the proper machinery, and dispose of the sewage on their farm. In many cases the cottages have the old privy vault in their gardens, and these are being very gradually replaced by earth-closets, which are more satisfactory provided they are intelligently looked after and a good supply of dry earth is provided, but if not they become a nuisance, and just as insanitary as the old privy vault. The contents of these vaults and closets is removed by the occupier and dug into their garden or allotments if they have one, otherwise they are removed by contract and disposed of on the land. Those occupiers in Alresford who are unable to dispose of their own house-refuse

have it removed twice weekly by a contract made with a firm by the District Council; the refuse is stored in metal receptacles with a well-fitting lid pending removal.

(11) **Schools.**—The sanitary condition of the Schools is satisfactory. Old Alresford School was closed for several weeks in the autumn, owing to an epidemic of whooping-cough reducing the number of attendances to a very low number. This epidemic commenced during the summer holidays, and I don't think the closing of the Schools had any appreciable effect in stamping it out.

(12) **Infectious Diseases.**—During the year nine cases of scarlet fever were notified as occurring in five different villages. These cases were of a very mild type, and no deaths occurred; the same remark applies to six cases of diphtheria which were notified. The infection in the cases of diphtheria most probably spread from a very mild case—showing no signs of illness—attending Alresford School.

Two deaths from whooping-cough occurred during the year. Parents often look upon this disease as of very little consequence, and send their children out in bad weather, with the result that bronchitis or pneumonia develop, which may cause fatal termination.

(13) **Vaccination.**—Ninety-five children were successfully vaccinated and forty-one obtained exemption certificates, or a percentage of 30.

(14) **Tuberculosis.**—Nine cases of pulmonary tuberculosis and five cases of tuberculosis of the glands and bones were notified. Sixteen deaths from tuberculosis occurred during the year, of which thirteen were pulmonary, and of this number eight occurred in persons between 25 and 45 years of age, showing, as has often been pointed out before, that the disease when it attacks the lungs carries off most cases at the best wage-earning period of life. In six of those eight cases infection arose, in all probability, from a previous case in the same family, demonstrating how necessary it is that all cases of pulmonary tuberculosis of an infectious character should be under strict supervision at home, or, if necessary, isolated, and that all rooms which have been occupied by them should be thoroughly disinfected.

(15) **Bye-laws.**—The only Bye-laws adopted by this district are “ With respect to new buildings and certain matters in connection with buildings.”

(16) **Offensive Trades.**—Thirty-one inspections were made and five defects found, which were remedied after receiving notice from the Inspector of Nuisances.

(17) **Improvements Required.**—Since my last Report an arrangement has been concluded with the Alton Council for receiving any of our infectious cases that it may be necessary to isolate away from home.

(18) **Factories and Workshops.**—Seventy-six inspections were made during the year, and eleven defects were found and remedied.

(19) **Local Government Board Enquiries.**—None.

(20) **River Pollution.**—No cases came under notice during the year.

(21) **The Housing and Town Planning Act.**—One hundred and sixteen houses were fully reported upon in the year, and of this number two were condemned as unfit for human habitation and one Closing Order was made. Eighty-six defects were reported, and all were remedied.

(22) **Improvements Effected During 1913** consist in the remedying of the structural defects and abating any nuisances that may be found during inspection of the district. During the year 2288 inspections were made, and 264 defects were found, and all were remedied on the informal notice of the Inspector of Nuisances, with the exception of six, which were brought to the notice of the Sanitary Authority before the work was finally completed.

I remain,
Your obedient Servant,

F. W. JOLLYE.

N.B.—The Tables of Vital Statistics for the District may be seen at the Office of the Clerk to the Council, at East Street, Alresford.

